Narrating The Allegorical Meaning In Naguib Mahfouz's The Trilogy

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Throughout the human civilization, religion has always been a big debatable discourse. It has been accepted sometimes and somewhere a constructive agency and vice versa and more interestingly it still happens. In the same fashion we people divide the followers of the religion into two parts as follow: religious, fundamental and conservative and further liberal, nonconservative and modern. Hence both the ideological differences are responsible in shaping the society anywhere in the world.

Naguib Mahfouz's The Trilogy is also a narrative of one family that believes in the existence of God and Abd al Jawad's family generation evolves and gets transformation by the passage of the time. The subject of religion always encompasses this family. When the establish business affairs, they start by the name of God keeping a hope of flourishing of the business affairs.

The story is introduced to the readers as a fundamentalist Muslim family living in Cairo When Egypt was occupied in the early 1900 by British forces. It can be thought that Mahfouz introduces a symbolic family whose issues can be seen among many families in Cairo. It is interesting here to show that the family structure of this can be seen from a strong power structure's perspective. Al Jawed is totally the embodiment of the patriarchy and masculinity. As a patriarchal character his presence matters for power, honor, status, righteousness and truth while his wife Amina devoted him and gives a degree of Lord. Rest characters are like familiars and family members are too affected by the power structure and they live with such a mindset. However they could discus many questions regarding religion, politics and moral behavior.

In the second volume, "Palace of Desire", there is a narrative of conflict between ideals and realities, dreams and desires. In fact the fundamental pursuit of the writer is to show the conflict among people or politics, religion and modernity. It means it shows Egyptian people are in the atmosphere of transition and searching a new liberal society. It is obvious that colonial set up was establishing its roots in politics, culture and resources. But the social public sphere is largely covered by the tradition Islamic patriarchy. As a result Abd al Jawad family opens a front of nationalist discourse and invited a clash between Egyptian national Movement community and the colonial operations.

Midaq Alley: It is just a small subaltern place in Cairo. The narrative includes the characters like SalimAlwan, a young barber shop owner, Umm Hamida a both attendant and marriage broker; HussainKirsha, a middle aged café owner, and Zaita, a street person who creates other beggars. Umm Hamida's daughter is engaged to several men but ends up a prostitute for a wealthy pimp, Ibrahim Faraj. This section covers wretchedness and poverty of alley. Loss of Egyptian culture and also nationalist consciousness towards modern colonial set up. Since Alley is one of the poorest palaces people were suffering from financial difficulties and unemployment. In fact there were no sufficient resources available there. Mahfouz also advocates here that people welcome modernity and accept the challenges for the idea of employability. So he marks the advent of the modernity. It was a realization and mass consciousness among people that things cannot be settled down at their right places until the colonial empire should be uprooted. Hamida in this narrative occupies the space of difference in Egyptian society of women. She wanted to escape from suffering the difficulties and wretchedness of Alley and explore the place of money making at the cost of exchange of her body and sexuality.

The Beggar: In this work, the protagonist having the Bohemian taste searches the meaning of life. He also indulged himself in extramarital affairs in order to satisfy his idealistic meaning of life. He is entrapped into existential and social personality. Actually for him things don't happen accord.

Before the investigation into the narrative, it would better understand the contextual approach of Mahfouz in wrapping up historical variations, particularly cultural transformations through economic, cultural, political, social modern and traditional illusions. It is quite obvious to accept the truth of geopolitical condition of Cairo during the colonial

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hegemony and its ruling agencyimplemented. But the modernity in colliding nature makes a paradigm shift in cultural transformation, giving a new identity of Cairo irrespective of the passively accepted circumstances of Cairo. There were some emerging voices in the support of the modernity and liberalism but the larger strength of the mass consciousness remained silent and waiting for the vanguard. But Mahfouz opens this front change and modernity through his writing, unlikely being a social activist in the streets of Cairo. In order to reveal the social and historical fact, Mahfouz allegoriesthe internal and external characters such as Hamid and Omar as they oscillating between old and new, East and West and internal and external characters.

It would better establish the connections of Mahfouze to the formulations and theoretical frames of some religious historians who always who always worked to bring social consciousness and changes in the society. Their propositions are always associated with people's belief in religion and how this superstructure as source of solidarity of community and also laws of life. In this context religion is an individual's way becoming irrecognisable within an established society. He or she becomes recognizable as a matter of fact he/ she solves the riddles of sacredness and profanity and they are prevalent themes of the society right from the beginning. Characters of Mahfouz are too the subject of the binaries of good and evil and old and new and theist and atheist. As MircaEliad(1954:04): "Among countless stones , one stone becomes sacred- and hence instantly becomes saturated with being because it constitutes a hierophany or possess more or again it commemorates a mythical act and so on." Similarly, Durkheim (1973:4) states in his theory of hierophanies that "it forms the basis of religion, splitting the human experience of reality into sacred and profane." The following line will support to intersect the writing of Mahfouz and Egyptian culture and history. It is true that Mahfouz's writing come across the major ideas such as politics of Egypt, Islam and Historical question of the time. The setting of his writing rest in Cairo and his characters are preoccupied by state and religion and modernity question.

Mahfouz's writings make Egyptian identity at different fronts as historical, religious, national and spiritual level. As Durkheim(1973:09) believes the "religious representations are collective representations that express collective realities; rites are the ways of acting that born only in

the midst of assembled groups and whose purpose is to evoke, maintain or recreate certain mental states of those groups." He also states how the first "system of representations were religious in origin" (1978:8), providing us with the new way to discuss epistemology. Through sociology of knowledge, Durkheim uses the history of religion to show how religions mirror or the way society is structured. It can be noted here that Mahfouz's idea of representation of Egyptian identities is completely religious, political and social. His writings thematically covers all these issues of the community need and also conscious drift towards times and space. To further Durkheim's own critique, it seems that Mahfouz's writings parallel some of the changes that religion and spirituality undergo the historical events.

Through sociological discourse, Durkheim uses the history of religions to show how religions mirror the way society is structured. It seems that this idea resonates with Mahfouz, as in his novels the history of Egyptian religion mirrors what society is going through. In the section on Egyptian Islam, I note that Mahfouz uses the history of Egypt and the theology of Islam to express an identity that accounts for exchanges and contacts between the colonizers, political restructuration, and even Islam. These influences have had an impact on where and how religion occupies society in Egypt. To further Durkheim's own critique, it seems that Mahfouz's writings parallel some of the changes that religion and spirituality undergo due to historical events. Durkheim (1973:198) questions the role of religion in society:

But if religion is the product of social cause, how can we explain the individual cult and the universalistic character of certain religions? It is born in foroexterno, how has it been able to pass into inner conscience of the individual and penetrate there ever more and more profoundly? If it is the work of definite and individualized societies, how has it been able to detach itself from them, even to the point of being conceived as something common to all humanity?

To further elaborate, moments of history or social realities in Mahfouz's characterizations become bracketed or arrested as prominent actions or events.Eliade's analysis of history in the context of Mahfouz's writings lies in the memory of the sacred, or as I have termed it at times in this dissertation, of nostalgia for something "pure" and idealized, in this case, Islam. Eliade (1954:136) states,

In all this, as we see, there is a supreme effort to liberate history from astral destiny or from the law of cosmic cycles and to return, through myth of the eternal renewal of Rome, to the archaic myth of the annual … regeneration of the cosmos through its eternal re-creation by the sovereign or the priest … history renews itself and, consequently, a new world begins; in the last analysis … the sovereign repeats the Creation of the cosmos.

History repeats itself, yet it also transitions and changes; similarly, in Mahfouz's work whenAbd al-Jawad dies, there is an end and a loss, but also the beginning of a new generation.

Mahfouz's Egypt is charged with portrayals of sacred, historical Egyptian heroes and prophets who attempt to achieve stability and peace in a profane life. For Mahfouz, Egypt can easily dissolve into extreme religious and personal powers, but they always result in an ethical and strong vision of Egyptian identity. As Edward Said (1993:23) has asserted, Egypt for Mahfouz has no counterpart in any other part of the world. Old beyond history, geographically distinct because of the Nile and its fertile valley, Mahfouz's Egypt is an immense accumulation of history, stretching back in time for thousands of years, and despite the astounding variety of its rulers, regimes, religions, and races, nevertheless retaining its own coherent identity. Moreover, Egypt has held a unique position among nations. The object of attention by conquerors, adventurers, painters, writers, scientists, and tourists, the country is like no other for the position it has held in human history, and the quasi-timeless vision it has afforded.

Through Naguib Mahfouz (1989:395) and modern Egyptian identities, one can see a diversity and multiplicity of both local narratives of Cairo and national events within Egypt, as well as in personal narratives.

Yasin probably detested the English as all Egyptians did, but deep inside he respected and venerated them so much that he frequently imagined they were made from a different stuff than the rest of mankind. This man had smiled at him and thanked him … Yasin had answered him correctly, imitating English pronunciation so far as his mouth would allow. He had succeeded splendidly and had merited the man's thanks.

First, it is important to discuss Mahfouz and his own context as an Egyptian, one who never traveled outside of his country for his own education whether it was Qur''?nic school or his degree in Western phi-

losophy. He remained in Egypt throughout the time he worked on his novels. His character portrayals and descriptions of Cairo are reflections of his own experiences, but the characters are fictitious and represent the philosophical implications of Islam and life in Cairo, a dynamic and changing place. As he writes in Midaq Alley, "the only things which suggest a past glory are its extreme age and a fewcouches placed here and there. In the café entrance a workman is setting up a second hand radio on the wall" (Mahfouz 1992:3). In this statement new material objects are shown replacing one another, but more importantly, they are inextricably linked. SassonSomekh (1973: 67) wrote about this theme in his book, The Changing Rhythm: A Study ofNajib Mahfouz's Novels. He identifies Mahfouz's historical inclinations and how he indicates change within the environment through his characters and the replacement of old technology with material advancements.

Zuqaq al-Midaqq is a story of an entire alley in one of those poverty stricken districts of Cairo. Its people are tempted to take the opportunity offered by World War II to salvage their lives from want. The result, however, is catastrophe Hamida, the beauty of the alley, is beguiled into prostitution to entertain the foreign soldiers. The drunken soldiers when trying to rescue Hamida kill her fiancé, who leaves the alley to become a barber in the British army Camp.

It is here important to focus that the writing of Mahfouz shows multiple identities in the formation of the country and the society. But by the world view of Mahfouz, he concentrates more on the traditional conventions such as Ottoman Empire amidst the old and new of the Pharoanicpast through to modern Egypt. In theseinstances, Mahfouz (2001:101) collapses the differences of the past, present, and futurewithin the framework of Egyptian identity.

Once we were Pharoanic. We became Greco-Pharoanic, then Greco-Roman - Pharoanic. Then we were Copts-at least until the Arabo-Islamic conquest. So how can we separate and distinguish all these cultural elements that have been molded together over the centuries to form a single nationality?

Midaq Alley describes the growing change as the face of the reality of traditional Cairene neighborhood dealing with the impact of World War II. It is mixed up with history, tradition, narratives and social reality-tired, old, and emerging anew with the nuances of modernity.

"Fundamentally and basically, its roots connect with life as a whole and yet, at the same time, it retains a number of secrets of a world now past" (Mahfouz 1992:1). Mahfouz's novel describes the postwar climate of Cairo in which the British presence and colonial world had destroyed the community in economic and social terms. Mahfouz's world is seen through this deteriorating alley:

While the "European" city developed, the old city, sacrificed to the modern city from the reign of Isma'il on, was more or less abandoned; its streets were neglected, cleaning was haphazard, water supply was only partial, and the sewers were poor or insufficient. (Raymond 2001:338)

Mahfouz has mastery to give the aesthetic touch of the city Cairo and its people. He subtly describes the narrative of the live of the people there. He uses a personal and social narrative to provide a fuller image of how Cairo and its inhabitants transform to their environment. In this alley, the characters' lives have shown with bare facts struggling and trying to overcome the challenges of the city. Zuqaq al-Midaq (Midaq Alley) is described as oscillating between isolation and a varied world, with little hope of connecting with the outside world. The characters in the novel shows both the faces as the face of being religious or the face of being secular. The alley is a meeting place, and the only outlet is Kirsha's coffeehouse, which is central to the life and narrative of the alley.

The morning light filled the alley and rays from the sun fell on the upper walls of Alwan's office and the barbershop…. The alley was turning another of the pages of its monotonous life, its inhabitants greeting the morning with their usual cries. (Mahfouz 1992:282)
We too get contrast in the character of Hamida as she changes the way of her living set up from the tradition to the modernity, accepting the British influence. She shows the meaning the old and the new can not exist together.

Part of its beauty (Hamida's new name titi) … is that it has no meanings and a word without meaning can mean almost anything. As a matter of fact, it's an ancient name that will amuse Englishmen and Americans, and one which their twisted tongues can easily pronounce. (Mahfouz 1992:217)

We see that Hamida's acceptance of her external world is something she wants to move towards material world .Here we see Hamida's

material desires functioning to drive herout of the alley, the home, the place where she grew up as an orphan; she detested theenvironment and the people around her. She is caught in Egypt's class struggle, but alsochallenged by a world outside. When Abbas accidentally meets Hamida later in the story,she tells him, "We're complete strangers now.

I can't go back and you can't change me"(Mahfouz: 1992: 201). While Hamida rebels against the alley and seeks to escape it, others leave it but return, and still others, content with life there, choose to remain. For better or worse, the alley becomes the focus of characters' actions, and their experience determines their attitudes regarding the quality of life there. The rebellion of a few residents cannot destroy the alley and its tradition, nor can the introduction of modern gadgets and ideas alter its essential being. Meantime, its inhabitants carry on their lives as usual through them Mahfouz is able to portray the vagaries of the life of common people who are ensnared in the alley and cannot leave it unless they compromise their traditional values and way of life. (Moosa 1997:98)

Hamida leaves in search of opportunitiesin the outside world and Hussain leaves the alley to join the army; neither can accept thestate of the alley. But Hussain returns as an unemployed, poor man and exclaims, "It's afilthy house, the alley stinks, and the people here are all cattle...."Bah! God curse the alley and who live in it(Mahfouz 1992:116).Similarly, Hamida expresses hatred towards her own life when she believes that it is not as good as the lives of Jewish girls.
"The Jewish girls have the only real life here."
"You must have been conceived by devils!" Her mother shouted. "None of my blood is in you."
"Maybe I'm a Pasha's daughter, even if illegitimately." (Mahfouz 1992:41)
Interestingly, Hamida's response connects her to the historical figure Isma'il Pasha who wanted to Westernize Cairo and institute secular models of life.

One finds a similar political backdrop in Mahfouz's The Beggar. The novel specially focuses on the central idea of spiritual crisis in the character Omar. The characters like Omar and Othman try to find out the solution to the country's problems of socialism as it is suggested byOthman who asks, "Since the state has embraced and is putting into practice theprogressive ideals, wouldn't it be wise for us to concentrate on our own business?"(Mahfouz 1986:108).

In the work The BeggarMahfouz raises many questions such as religious, political, and spiritual in order to establish the social and moral integrity. It delineates the characters of the 1950s and 1960s bourgeoisie class of Egypt. This age gives us the span of Islam and Naser in Egypt.Omar repeats the following phrase:"Don't we live our lives knowing that our fate rests with God?" (Mahfouz 1986:52).In the novel Omar only defines the meaning of the beggar just through the contemplation of his life. But Mahfouz suggests that only the contemplation of the life can notbring the meaning of the life or it can be an irresponsible step and will bring nothing but defeat in life. There mustbe social consciousness and responsibility.Othman looked inquiringly at Omar, but his head was still turned toward the Nile.

"As if he's searching for his soul." Mustapha observed.

Othman frowned. "Wasn't it he who lost it?" Then he sighed. "So it's all ended in philosophical meditations."

Mustapha went on, trying to restrain his mirth. "I've often felt that he wanted to revive his dormant impulse to write, and he continues to try. But he dreams sometimes of a strange ecstasy." "Can you be more explicit?"

Omar turned toward them, "Drop the subject and just consider it an illness."

Othman looked at him sharply and murmured, "Perhaps it really is a disease, for you've lost your old vigor."

Mustapha said, "Or he's searching for the meaning of his existence."

"When we're aware of our responsibility toward the masses, the search for a personal meaning becomes quite insignificant." Omar asked with irritation, "Do you think the question will die when the dictatorship of the proletariat is established?"

"But it hasn't been established yet." He looked from one of them to the other."

"Scientists search for the secret of life and death through knowledge, not through illness." (Mahfouz 1986:18)

In this novel, Omar is merely escapist charater seeking his meaning outside of the world rather reality of the world. The most interestingly the character is symbolic to the society where Mahfouz centralizes his idea that mist of the population of the Cairo society are living

in the illusion and that is not doubt affecting the society at larger scale. It is also suggested that people are in this way leaving their society, family and becoming meaning the social responsibility. This is most apparent at the end of the novel, when Omar is in a garden and his friend, Othman, seeking a place to hide to escape the authorities. Omar is shot and Othman is captured. As they are traveling in the ambulance, Omar wakes up and asks, "If you really wanted me, why did you desert me?" (Mahfouz 1986:140). This is the greatest sense of clarity Omar experiences throughout the novel, and it echoes the reality Egyptians experienced as they moved through social and political transformations and sought a new identity. The 1952 revolution and the failure of socialism and democracy under Nasser left an indelible mark on Mahfouz, but many young Egyptians, like Othmain the novel, tried to create a rebellion against the authorities even after spending time in prison.

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